

Conservation District Board Member Recruitment Guide

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I. The Need for Recruitment

Effective conservation district programs are built with outstanding and qualified district board members. A district board whose members exhibit a diverse combination of skills will be better able to gain community support for district and local conservation efforts. This reference book provides ideas and methods to recruit district board members that will improve the boards responsiveness to the community they serve.

Some districts have a difficult time replacing a district board member. Other districts might not think recruitment of district board members is a problem, but are willing to prepare themselves for the possibility. While the loss of a respected board member is difficult, the turnover of members can stimulate board activity. Regardless of your district's situation, this book provides a way for the district to decide what it needs in a new district board member(s), and how to develop a strategy to meet these needs through recruitment of new members.

Recruitment of district board members begins with the identification of qualities desired in current and prospective board members, and the definition of roles for all district board members. District boards then develop and use a variety of recruitment strategies to find citizens who have skills and interests compatible with the district. Once found, these citizens are integrated into district programs and activities as elected or appointed board members, associates. Employees , and volunteers. By following the outline in this publication, you can help assure that new district board members not only are interested in conservation, but also have the precise skills that best suit your district's needs. Although the process takes time and energy commitment, a well developed recruitment plan will pay huge dividends in the form of committed and responsible district board members.

Strong boards strive for the diversity of age, ideas and backgrounds to achieve successful program development.

II. The Importance of Community Outreach

Community outreach is at the heart of building a strong and responsive district program that provides the best possible customer service to the people in your community. An inclusive district board will reflect the ideas and culture of the entire community and allow all to share ideas and feel comfortable coming to the conservation district for assistance. Achieving an effective and inclusive community outreach program does not happen overnight. It takes time, energy and commitment to build a strong and effective district board. Your efforts to include a broad range of community interests should not be driven by outside expectations but instead an internal desire to see all of the people of your community served.

III. Process to Help You Recruit

Analyzing the Needs of Your District

Before you begin to look for someone to serve as a district board member, your board should first identify what the needs of your district are for human resources. This is an opportunity for your board to expand the membership of the district and to find people that can help the district expand their program.

1. List major programs and activities of your district

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your district?

Strengths

Weaknesses

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

3. What programs and activities would you like to do but because of the lack of resources, human and other, have been unable to accomplish?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4. Identify types of people that have knowledge, experience or skills that can help you meet these accomplishments.

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<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

5. List skills, abilities, knowledge, and experience provided by each current board member.

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<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

6. Who does your district serve? List your clients.

<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

7. What new types of board members could help diversify your board, accomplish your mission, and better serve your clients?

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<hr/>	<hr/>
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Recruitment Strategies and Material

Board member recruitment of qualified and talented individuals requires looking beyond just your current circle of friends, relatives and business associates. It means actively seeking ideas and prospects from outside your inner circle. Local organizations that represent minorities and women should be invited to recommend a candidate based on your district's needs. Your local board should develop a list of potential groups, organizations and individuals to contact when recruiting a new member. **Some examples to consider include:**

- Community groups that represent minority cultures and women
- Conservation and environmental special interest groups
- People on boards of key organizations – banks, charities
- Advertising agencies and marketing firms
- Teachers and college professors
- Researchers and writers
- Accountants, bankers, and investment managers
- Timber harvesting contractors and professional foresters
- Horticulturists, nursery operators and tree farmers
- Farmers and ranchers
- Hobby and part time farmers
- Former legislators and public board members
- Retired local, state or federal employees
- Consumer activists
- Public relations professionals
- Geologists and engineers
- Professional fund-raisers
- Agronomists and soil scientists
- Economists and social scientists
- Urban interests

A recruitment prospectus (detailed in the next section) should be provided to each entity included on the list developed by your local board.

Identifying Qualities and Qualifications of a District Board Member

Good district board members need to have a strong conservation ethic, skills and knowledge in conservation, as well as management skills and leadership abilities. Recruitment of potential board members begins with identifying the qualities needed and desired by the local community. District board members should be recruited on the basis of identified qualities and qualifications and not on the criteria of “who’s available that we know.”

Some desirable qualities for district board members would include:

- Open minded
- Strong leadership skills
- Innovative
- Likeable
- Professionalism
- Understands conservation issues
- Good speaking skills
- Progressive
- Always learning
- Fundraising abilities
- Personnel Management
- Legislative understanding skills
- Leadership network in the community

In addition to these, other qualifications to look for could include:

- Individuals that can devote adequate time to the job. Some districts have a written policy dictating removal of a board member for a certain number of consecutive absences from board meetings.
- Effective communication skills and the ability to get along well with other district board members, staff and assisting agency staff.
- The ability to tolerate the inevitable criticism of leadership. An individual’s judgment and integrity are most important.
- The ability to represent their own constituencies and avoid conflicts of interest.

What additional qualities do you want your district board members to have?

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Recruitment Prospectus

In order to get people interested in becoming involved with your district, they need to know what the district does and the programs and services it offers. One way to inform prospective members is to develop a recruitment prospectus which may include:

- Mission and vision statements
- Your district's primary goals and objectives
- Legal authority
- Major issues
- Major programs and activities
- Funding sources
- Expectations of district board members
- Benefits of being a district board member

Model Recruitment Prospectus and Standard Form

Becoming a Board Member of _____ Conservation District (name)

Concerned citizens in _____ County can help conserve natural resources
(name)
by serving on the _____ Conservation District Board. If the issues and
(name)
programs stated in this document interest you – please call _____ at
(name)

(number)

1. **Mission:** (insert your district's mission statement)

2. **Vision:** (insert your district's vision statement)

3. **Goals and Objectives:**

- Establish soil and water conservation policy for the district
- Assess resource needs
- Develop strategies to address these needs
- Provide quality conservation education to county school children
- Provide land users with technical assistance
- Develop programs to address local natural resource problems
- Serve as focal point for addressing natural resource issues and coordinating various programs to help identified concerns

4. **Legal Authority:**

_____ (conservation district enabling law number) of the
Code of

_____ (state name) defines a conservation district as a
political subdivision of the _____ (state name)

5. **Major Issues at this Time:**

- Water resources/water quality
- Failing septic systems
- Erosion from cropland
- Erosion from construction sites
- Land users needing technical assistance

6. Major Programs and Activities

- Agricultural cost-share program
- Conservation equipment program
- Tree seedling sales
- Publish quarterly newsletter
- Approval of conservation plans
- Review of county planning proposals
- Educational programs for schools, youth, adult, and civic groups
- Review erosion and sediment control plans.

7. Funding Sources

- Local governments (board of supervisors, city councils, county departments...)
- State government (department of conservation, conservation commission...)
- Grants (district funding raising activities)
- Federal grants, agreements...
- District educational seminars and programs

8. Expectations of Directors

- Take advantage of training opportunities to develop abilities
- Attend board and committee meetings
- Participate in district programs and activities
- Serve as chair of one committee
- Be involved & responsible for district program direction
- Develop policies and programs
- Promote soil & water conservation in the community
- Help manage staff
- Represent district in public
- Help secure financial resources
- Promote district

9. Benefits of Being a Director:

- Being a voice for the citizens of your county/city
- Self satisfaction of providing your time to improve the environment
- Being actively involved with assistance and educational programs for citizens
- Providing leadership in community resource conservation
- Development of leadership skills

Additional information is available by calling the district office at _____
_____ or by contacting a current district board member.

Recruitment Prospectus

Mission:

Vision:

Goals & Objectives:

Legal Authority:

Major Issues:

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
-

Major Programs & Activities:

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
-

Funding Sources:

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
-

District Board Member Expectations

Benefits of Being a District Board Member:

- 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
-

Recruitment Strategies and Materials

Once you have identified your district's needs, the qualities of good district board members and have developed a recruitment prospectus and job description, it is time to develop your recruitment strategy. Whether your district has a resignation/retirement, or an election, the following may be helpful in your recruiting efforts.

The sample strategies that follow are only the beginning of what your district can develop. There are advantages and disadvantages to each. Choose the ones that best suit your needs. Ongoing recruitment using a variety of strategies normally produces a greater number of potential nominees who represent more diverse skills, interests and backgrounds.

Sample Strategies

Assemble a Board Development Team: An important first strategy would be to form a board development team charged with responsibility to examine board member needs including recruitment, orientation, and development of board members. The team should include representatives from underserved communities to help identify potential candidates in those communities. The board development team should be broader than a simple nominating committee.

District Board Members Information Form: A nomination form describing qualifications the district board has identified can be distributed to organizations in the community.

Letter to Organizations: Direct correspondence to organizations, including those representing women and minorities, about potential nominees for district board member positions is an effective way to attract qualified individuals. The letter should include qualifications the board is looking for in potential nominees.

Public Service Announcements: Radio and television stations run free public service announcements for community organizations. In many areas of the country there are Spanish-language stations. Many educational channels feature alternative programming in a number of different languages.

News Releases: Another method of reaching a wide audience regarding a district board member vacancy is through news releases in newspaper, radio, television and other media .

Newspaper Advertisements: Well written and attractive advertisements in newspapers that target underserved populations may help create interest in a district board member position.

District Recruitment Brochure: An effective way of informing potential candidates about district programs and activities, and about the powers and authorities of a district board member is through a well developed, clearly written information brochure.

Recommendations from Staff and Cooperating Agencies: Staff that have provided direct services to clients are a source of ideas for potential candidates that have qualifications being sought by a district board. Staffs also have contacts throughout the community that may be different from the current board members' contacts

Recruitment at Annual/Special Meetings: Make a special point to advertise your annual and special meetings in the media. Keep an attendance list at events to save the names and addresses of people who come.

Job Description and Recruitment Prospectus Distribution: Distribute your district board member recruitment prospectus to organizations within the community.

Personal Contacts: Personal contacts with a variety of community and organization leaders by district board members can be an effective method to create a pool of candidates different from that of a current circle of friends and relatives. Efforts to personally contact organizations that represent women and minorities could pay off through the development of joint projects between your district and those organizations.

Sample District Board Member Information Form

Potential District Board Member Information Form

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone _____

Resident of the (county/city) of: _____

- a. Explain your interest in soil and water conservation and becoming a district board member.

- b. Briefly describe what contributions and skills you will bring to the district.

c. How much time are you able or willing to commit to district activities?

4. Nature of nominee's work/professional/education background.

d. List other organizations, clubs and affiliations: (include dates of offices held and honors received.

e. Please provide a brief biography of yourself.

Sample District Board Member Self-Nomination Form

If you are unable to answer any of these questions, please call the district chair at _____ for more information. (Phone #)

1. Do you understand and are you committed to the mission of the district? _____
2. Can you devote the time, resources, and energy required of a district board member?

3. Do you understand the roles and responsibilities of the district?

4. Are you willing to attend meetings regularly, making them a priority for the duration of your term?

5. Are you willing to participate in necessary training, education, and development activities?

6. Will you actively serve on district committees? _____

Return completed form to: _____

Sample Public Service Announcement #1

_____ Soil and Water Conservation District

(insert address)

Public Service Announcement #1

Length: 30 seconds

For broadcast at will

Soil and Water Conservation District Board Member

Contact: _____

(insert name & phone #)

AUDIO

You may think that soil and water conservation affects only farmers and ranchers but: Idaho's soil and water quality affects the water you drink and the food you eat.

If you're concerned about these issues, and want to have a voice in decisions affecting Idaho's environment, think about becoming a board member of the (name) Soil and Water Conservation District. The (name) Soil and Water Conservation District includes the county (ies) of (name(s)). As a board member you would help set conservation priorities and policy for your county. Contact the district today at (phone#)

Sample Public Service Announcement #2

_____ Soil and water Conservation District

_____ (insert name & phone #)

Public Service Announcement #2

Length: 30 seconds

For broadcast at will

Soil and Water Conservation District Board Member

Contact: _____

_____ (insert name & phone #)

AUDIO

You don't have to choose between prosperous farms and a healthy environment -- you can have both.

If you want to help your county maintain its farmland while protecting the environment, you should consider becoming a board member of the (name) Soil and Water Conservation District.

As a board member, you would help make important decisions about conservation in your county. Get involved....help make Idaho a better place for you and your children. For more information, contact (name) Soil and Water Conservation District soon at (phone#)

Sample Public Service Announcement #3

_____ Soil and Water Conservation District

_____ (insert address)

Public Service Announcement #3

Length: 15 seconds

For broadcast at will

Soil and water Conservation District Board Member

Contact: _____

_____ (insert name & phone #)

AUDIO

If You want a voice in conservation decisions in your county, think about becoming a Board member for the (name) Soil and Water Conservation District. Contact the district office at (phone#) soon. Isn't it time you gave back to the community?

Sample District Board Member News Release #1

News Release-For Immediate Release:

_____ (date)

For further information contact: _____ (name & phone #)

Conservation district filings open until _____ (date)

Concerned about the water quality in _____ (name) County? “You can make a difference by filing before (date) to run as a board member for the (name) soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) in the (date) election”. (chair name), chair of the local conservation district, announced recently.

“Board members have a direct say in how we deal with many important natural resource issues: water quality, forestry, agricultural best management practices, and soil erosion” (chair’s name) said. “Running for a district board member position is an excellent way to make an impact on our natural resources.” (Chair’s name) said.

Conservation districts are political subdivisions of Idaho that manage and direct conservation programs. The (name) SWCD is governed by a (number) member board, which oversees a staff of (number). Board members represent the counties of (list counties.) Staff works directly with landowners, district conservation priorities, personnel issues and coordination with state and federal agencies and other local entities of government. In addition, board members are community leaders in resource management, providing guidance and information to their friends and neighbors.

Board members are not paid, but may receive compensation for expenses related to attending meetings and other activities of the board. For further information, contact the (name) Soil and Water Conservation District at (phone#)

Sample District Board Member Election News Release #2

News Release - For Immediate Release

_____(date)

For further information contact : _____(name & phone #)

Soil and Water Conservation District Directors Will Be Chosen In November Election

Choosing a candidate this _____ (date) election for director of the _____ (name) Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) could affect things like the quality of the water you drink, the amount of pollution in the lakes you use, and whether that wetland area in the park, where the ducks used to live, will be restored.

Because districts are local units of government entrusted with managing and directing conservation activities, board members have a great deal of influence on conservation decisions in their communities. The _____ (name) SWCD Board oversees the district's efforts and provides guidance for future natural resource planning in the counties of _____(list counties).

Elected board members serve four-year terms. The _____(name) SWCD Board meets every _____(day of the month) to discuss district business. They serve as non paid elected officials that are reimbursed for expenses relating to district activities. For more information about the district board position you may call _____(phone#).

Sample District Board Member Election News Release #3

NEWS RELEASE - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

_____ (DATE)

For further information contact _____ (name & phone #)

Soil and Water Conservation District Board Members Help Conserve Our Area's Soil and Water Resources

It may be your child's teacher, a relative, your best friend, or the lady at the grocery store. It may even be your next door neighbor. Who are these people? They're local citizens, an official, elected or appointed, to help develop management strategies regarding local conservation issues.

And, while district board members are elected to four-year terms in general elections, you can also volunteer to serve as an associate member (no election required).

Payment for these positions doesn't come in monetary form, but in the satisfaction of knowing that you are among many others helping your county conserve its natural resources for future generations, your children and grandchildren.

What are the responsibilities of a district board member? To be effective district board member requires more than just attending a meeting. Board members are encouraged to serve on various committees with the state and/or district.

Part of their roles is to educate the public about soil and water conservation. They may help in the development of tours, newsletters, displays, meet with landowners and such. The ways in which district board members can contribute are endless.

In addition, they work closely with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Consolidated farm Services Agency (CFSA), and Idaho Soil Conservation Commission (ISCC), just to name a few.

Sample District Board Member Election News Release #3

There is a popular misconception that local conservation district and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are one and the same. This is untrue. While the two often work together within the same office, the district administers programs such as _____, while the NRCS provides technical assistance and guidance to complete best management practices.

So look around you. The conservation practice in the field near you may belong to a district board member or cooperator. District board members practice what they preach, and usually have farms and/or land to prove it, plus the satisfaction that they are helping to make changes for the good of all the citizens of the _____ (name) Conservation District.

If you are interested in becoming a board member or an associate member or would like more information, call the _____ (name) Conservation District at _____.
(phone #)

Sample Recruitment Classified Ad

Classified Ad

The _____ Soil and water Conservation District will be accepting nominations for a vacant district board member position. Board members are public officials responsible for developing programs to address local natural resource concerns. Interested persons may submit a resume or letter of recommendations to _____ (address). For more information please call _____ (phone #).

Example Letter for Potential Supervisors

(Date)

Your name has been recommended to us as a possible candidate to serve as a board member of the _____ (name) Soil and Water Conservation District.

Our conservation district conducts a variety of programs to conserve and develop the natural resources in our area. We provide information and technical assistance to local landowners and operators to help them use soil and water conservation practices. We also carry out an active conservation education program for young people and adults. The _____ (name) Soil and Water Conservation District works closely with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and other agencies and organizations with responsibilities in natural resource conservation and development.

As an elected supervisor of the _____ (name) Soil and Water Conservation District, you will represent your neighbors to carry out a sound resource program in the district. You are probably wondering how much time being a district supervisor involves. Below are some of the activities you will be involved with as a supervisor:

- a) Attend regular monthly district meetings and any special meetings.
- b) Manage funds and facilities of the district.
- c) Meet with county commissioners to discuss the district annual budget and activities.
- d) Attend the spring and fall (one-day) Division meetings of the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts.
- e) Employ secretarial help and oversee this person's duties.
- f) Attend the (three-day) annual meeting of the Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts.
- g) Work with Senators and Representatives of the Idaho legislature and U.S. Congressional delegation.
- h) Attend special tours and meetings to further our conservation goals.
- i) Establish district policies, goals and annual and long range plans.

Conservation district board Members are essentially volunteers, although mileage and expenses are reimbursed for certain projects. Your reward as a board member of the _____ (name) Soil and Water Conservation District will be the satisfaction of making a valuable contribution to the people and natural resources of your district, state and nation. If you are concerned about caring for the natural resources in the _____ (name) Soil and Water Conservation District, we would welcome you as a candidate for the position of district board member. A nomination petition is enclosed. If you wish to run for district board member this petition must be signed by 5 registered voters in _____ County (this may be husband and wife). The petition must be notarized and returned to the _____ Soil and Water Conservation District office by September 1, 2004. If you would like more information, you may contact one of the district supervisors, the district office, or a district supervisor will contact you by (date).

_____, Chairman

Soil and Water Conservation District

Sample Newspaper or Newsletter Advertisement #1

Elected District Board Members Opportunity

- Represent landowners and the general public while directing natural resource conservation programs
- Carry out natural resource protection responsibilities according to the Idaho Soil Conservation District Law
- Identify local conservation needs, set goals and implement plans to protect soils, water, wildlife and other renewable natural resources

If being one of five/seven locally, elected decision-makers who are part of a grass-roots delivery system for providing technical assistance to landowners and landusers to help protect local renewable natural resources in our county interests you, consider filing as a candidate for board member of our local conservation district.

Eligibility

- Anyone who is interested in natural resource protection issues; and
- Who owns land within the conservation district boundary; and
- Who is a qualified county elector.

Conservation Districts

- - Districts are subdivisions of state government that are directed by boards of five or seven elected board members. Board members serve four-year terms. Board members direct paid staff to provide technical assistance to landowners and are partnered with the Federal Natural Resource Conservation Service for additional assistance.

Applications

- Applications for board member positions are available from the conservation district office at (phone #). Completed applications may be mailed to the local conservation district or turned into the County Clerk at the _____(County) Courthouse.

Sample Newspaper or Newsletter Advertisement #2

Water

There's More than Meets The Eye

Most of our drinking water comes from underground aquifers, deep within the earth. Right now it's still clean enough to drink. But what about the future?

Help protect groundwater and other natural resources by becoming a board member for your local soil and water conservation district (SWCD).

Board Member are elected officials who make important decisions about how water our of sight isn't out of mind. File for District Board Member at your SWCD office until _____ (date) and get your name on the ballot.

Call your SWCD for Details

_____ District Name
_____ Address
_____ Phone Number